

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 26, 2002

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NRC DELAYS NUCLEAR SECURITY MEASURES UNTIL AUGUST 2002 AND MAKES THEM 'TEMPORARY'

Markey lambastes agency for 'pre-Sept. 11' mentality

WASHINGTON, D.C. --

Today Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA) released the following statement in response to orders issued by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to require enhanced security measures at civilian nuclear facilities.

"Today, almost 6 months after September 11, the NRC finally decided to order new interim security measures at nuclear reactors. However, the NRC order states that these measures have been taken only because 'the generalized high-level threat environment has persisted longer than expected.' It seems that while the President is exhorting the public to accept that the terror threat may last years, the NRC is acting surprised that it has lasted so long," said Rep. Markey. "These measures, which are so central to homeland security, appear to be temporary, are not required to be fully implemented until August 31, 2002, and can be relaxed or rescinded by the NRC at any time. Indeed, the NRC continues to oppose legislation mandating a permanent upgrade of security regulations and procedures at nuclear power plants, despite the fact that such legislation has passed the House. The NRC is still operating in a pre-September 11 world."

Rep. Markey continued, "While the NRC and the nuclear power industry act like 'It can't happen here,' we know all too well that the terrorists of Al Qaeda have contemplated and would carry out an attack on a nuclear facility. President Bush disclosed in his State of the Union Speech that diagrams of nuclear power plants were discovered in Al Qaeda hideouts in Afghanistan, and members of Al Qaeda have said that U.S. nuclear facilities are attractive terrorist targets."

"The reality is that current regulations and these new interim measures ignore many of the risks that the NRC decided prior to September 11th were just UNTHINKABLE. This complacency breeds neglect, and neglect breeds disaster. The NRC must take immediate and permanent steps to revise the security regulations to reflect the true nature of the terrorist threat we now face."

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